

THE
HISTORY
OF THE
Emperor Manalay,
AND HIS
VIRTUOUS WIFE:

A Story taken from Ancient History.

*Here virtue got it's just reward,
Tho' cost the Fair much pain;
As you shall quickly understand,
When you peruse the same.*



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THE
HISTORY
OF

Manalay and his Cruel Brother;

OR, THE

CHASTE EMPRESS.



IN Rome there once dwelt a mighty Emperor, named Manalay, who had wedded the King's daughter of Hungaria, a fair lady and grateful in all her works, especially she was merciful. On a time as the Emperor lay in his bed, he bethought himself that he would go visit the Holy Land. And on the morrow he called to him the Empress his wife, and his own only brother, and thus he said: Dear lady, I may not, nor will not hide

from you the privities of my heart, I purpose to visit the Holy Land, wherefore I ordain thee principally to be lady and governess over all my Empire, and all my people; and under thee I ordain here my brother to be thy Steward, and to provide all things that may be profitable to my empire and my people.

Then said the Empress, since it will no otherwise be, but that thou wilt needs go to visit the City of Jerusalem, I shall be in your absence as true as any turtle that has lost her mate; for as I believe you shall not escape thence with your life.

The Emperor then comforted her with fair words, and kissed her, and after that took his leave of her and all others, and went to the City of Jerusalem.

And anon after the Emperor was gone, his brother became so proud, that he oppressed poor men and robbed rich men; and he did worse than this, for he daily stirred the Empress to commit sin with him: but ever answered again as an holy and devout woman, and said, I will (quoth she)

never consent to you nor to any other as long as my lord liveth; nevertheless this knight would not leave off with this answer, but ever when he found her alone, he made his complaint to her, and stirred her by all the ways that he could to sin with him.

When this lady saw that he would not cease for any answer, nor would not amend himself; when she saw her time she called to her three or four of the worthiest men of the Empire, and said to them thus: Is it not known to you, that my lord the Emperor ordained me principal governor of this Empire, and has also ordained his brother to be Steward under me, and that he should do nothing without my counsel, but he doth all contrary, for he oppresseth greatly poor men, and likewise robbeth the rich: and yet he would do more than this if he might have his intent; wherefore I command you in my lords name, that you bind him fast and cast him into prison.

Then said they, inasmuch as he hath done many evil deeds since our lord the Emperor went away, therefore we are ready to obey your commands,

but in this matter you must answer for us to our lord the Emperor.

Then said she, dread ye not, if my lord knew what he hath done as well as I, he would put him to the foulest death that could be thought. Immediately these men laid hands on him, and bound him fast with iron chains, and put him into prison, where he lay a long time after, till at last it happened there came tidings that the Emperor was coming home, and had obtained great renown and victory. When his brother heard of his coming, he said, I would to God, my brother might not find me in prison, for if he do, he will enquire the cause of my imprisonment of the Empress, and she will tell him all the truth how I moved her to commit sin, and so on her account I shall have no favour of my brother, but lose my life; this know I well: therefore it shall not be so. Then sent he a messenger unto the Empress, praying her that she would vouchsafe to come to the prison door, that he might speak a word or two with her.

The Empress came to him and en-

quired of him what he would have. He answered and said, O lady, have mercy upon me, for if the Emperor my brother find me in prison, then shall I die without any remedy.

Then said the Empress, if I might know that thou would'st be a good man, and leave thy folly, thou should'st find grace. Then did he promise her assuredly to be true, and amend all his trespasses. When he had thus promised, the Empress delivered him anon, and made him to be bathed and shaven, and apparelled him worthily according to his state, and then she said unto him thus: Now good brother, take thy steed and come with me, that we may meet my lord. He answered and said, Lady, I am ready to fulfill your will and commandment in all things, and then the Empress took him with her and many other knights, and so rode forth to meet the Emperor: and as they rode together by the way they saw a great hart run before them, wherefore every man with such hounds as they had, chased him on horse-back, so that with the Empress was left no creature save on-

ly the Emperor's brother, who seeing that no man was there but they two, thus he said unto the Empress: Lo, lady, here is nigh us a private forest, and long it is ago that I spoke to thee of love, come now and consent unto me, that I may lie with thee.

Then said the Empress, ah! fool, what may this be? yester-day I delivered thee out of prison upon thy promise in hope of amendment, and now thou art returned to thy folly again, wherefore I say now unto thee, as I have said before, there shall no man do such a thing with me, save only my lord the Emperor, which he ought of very duty to do. Then said he, if thou wilt not consent to me, I shall hang thee here upon a tree in this forest, where no man shall find thee and so shalt thou die an evil death. The Empress answered meekly and said, though thou smite off my head, or put me to death with all manner of torments, thou shalt never have my consent to such a sin.

When he heard this, he unclothed her all save her smock, and hanged her up by the hair upon a tree, and

ried her steed before her, and so rode to his fellows, and told them that a great host of men met him and took the Empress away from him, and when he had told them this, they all made great lamentation.

It befel on the third day after, there came an earl to hunt in that forest, and as he rode beating the bushes, he unkennels a fox; which his hounds followed fast till they came near the tree where the Empress hanged. And when the dogs smelt the savour of her, they left the fox, and ran towards the tree as fast as they could.

The earl seeing this, wondered greatly, and spurring his horse, followed them 'till he came where the Empress hanged, when the earl saw her thus hanging, he marvelled greatly, for as much as she was right fair and beautiful to behold; wherefore he said unto her in this wise: O woman who art thou? and of what country? and wherefore hangest thou here in this manner.

The Empress that was not yet fully dead, but at point ready to die, answered and said, I am (quoth she) a

strange woman, and am come out of
 a far country, but how I came hither
 God knoweth. Then answered the
 Earl and said, whose horse is this that
 standeth by thee bound to this tree?
 Then answered the lady and said, that
 it was hers. When the Earl heard
 this, he saw well that she was a gen-
 tlewoman and come of noble lineage,
 wherefore he was the rather moved
 with pity, and said unto her: O fair
 lady, thou seemest of noble blood, and
 therefore I purpose to deliver thee
 from this mischief, if thou wilt pro-
 mise to go with me, and nourish my
 fair young daughter, and teach her
 at home in my castle, for I have no
 child but only her, and if thou keep
 her well thou shalt have a good reward
 for thy labour. Then said she, As
 far forth as I can or may, I shall ful-
 fill your intent. And when she had
 thus promised him, he took her down
 off the tree, and led her home to his
 castle, and gave her the keeping of his
 daughter, that he loved so much, and
 she was cherished so well, that she lay
 every night in the Earl's chamber,
 and his daughter with her: and in

the chamber every night there burned a lamp, which hanged between the Empress's bed and the Earl's bed. This lady behaved herself so gently, that she was beloved of every creature. There was at that time in the Earl's house a Steward, who loved much this Empress, and often spoke to her of his love. But she answered him again and said, know dear friend, for a certainty, that I will never love any man in such manner, but only him whom I am greatly bound to love by God's commandments.

Then said the Steward, then thou wilt not consent unto me? Sir (quoth she) what need you any more to ask such things? The vow that I have made I will truly keep, and hold by the grace of God.

And when the Steward heard this, he went his way in great wrath and anger, thinking within himself, if I may, I shall be revenged on thee.

It befel upon a night within short time after, that the Earl's chamber door was forgotten and left unshut, which the Steward had anon perceived. And when they were all asleep,

he went and spied by the light of the lamp where the Empress and the maiden lay together, and with that he drew out his knife and cut the throat of the Earl's daughter, and put the knife into the Empress's hand, she being asleep, and not knowing thereof, to the intent that when the Earl awaked, he should think that she had cut his daughter's throat, and so would she be put to a shameful death for this mischievous deed. And when the damsel was thus slain, and the bloody knife in the Empress's hand, the Countess awaked out of her sleep, and saw by the light of the lamp, the bloody knife in the Empress's hand, wherefore she was almost out of her wits, and said to the Earl, O my lord, behold in yonder lady's hand a wonderful thing.

The Earl awaked and looked towards the Empress's bed, and saw the bloody knife, as the countess had said: wherefore he was greatly moved, and cried to her and said, awake woman out of sleep, what thing is this that I see in thy hand: Then the Empress through his cry awaked out of her

sleep, and in her waking, the knife fell out of her hand, and with that she looked by her, and found the Earl's daughter dead by her side, and all the bed besprinkled with blood, wherefore with an high voice she cried and said, alas! alas! and woe is me, My Lord's daughter is slain.

Then cried the countess unto the earl with a piteous voice, and said, O my lord, let this devilish woman be put to the foulest death that can be thought, which thus hath slain our only child.

Then when the countess had thus said to the Earl, he said to the Empress in this wise; the high God knoweth that thou mischievous woman hast slain my daughter with thine own hands, for I saw the bloody knife in thy hand, and therefore thou shalt die a foul death. Then said the Earl in this wise: O thou woman, were it not I dread God greatly, I should cleave thy body with my sword in two parts, for I delivered thee from hanging, and now thou hast slain my daughter, nevertheless, from me thou shalt have no harm, therefore

go thy way out of this city without any delay, for if I find thee here after this day, thou shalt die a most cruel death.

Then arose this woeful Empress, and put on her clothes, and after leapt on her palfry, and rode toward the east alone without any safe conduct; and as she rode thus mourning by the way, she espyed on the left side of the way, a pair of gallows, and seven officers leading a man to be hanged, wherefore she was moved with great pity, and smote her horse with her stick, and rode to them, praying them she might redeem that misdoer, if he might be saved from death by any means.

Then said they, lady, it pleaseth us well that you redeem him. Anon, the Empress accorded with them, and payed his ransom and he was delivered.

Then said she to him: Now my good friend, be true to me 'till thou die, since I have delivered thee from death.

On my soul (quoth he) I promise you ever to be true. And when he

had thus said, he followed the lady, 'till they came nigh a city, and then said the Empress to him; good friend, go forth thy way before me into the city, and see thou take up for us an honest lodging, for there I purpose to rest a while. Her man went forth as she commanded, and took up for her a good and an honest lodging, where she abode a long time. When the men of the city perceived her beauty, they wondered greatly, wherefore many of them craved of her unlawful love, but all was in vain, for they might not speed in any wise.

It happened after upon a day, that there came a Ship full of Merchandize, and arrived in the Haven of that city. When the lady heard this, she said unto her servant: Go to the ship, and see if there be any Cloth for my use.

Her servant went forth to the ship, where he found many very fine clothes; wherefore he prayed the master of the ship, that he would come into the city, and speak with his lady. The master granted him, and so the servant came home to his lady before, and

warned her of the coming of the master of the ship. Soon after the master of the ship came and saluted her courteously : and the lady received him according to his degree, praying him that she might have for her money such cloth as might be convenient for her wearing. Then he granted that she should have any thing that she liked, and soon they were agreed, wherefore the servant went immediately again with the master of the ship for the cloth. And when they were both within on ship board, the master said to the lady's servant : my dear friend, to thee I would open my mind, if I might trust to thee, and if thou help me, thou shalt have of me a great reward. Then answered he and said : I shall (quoth he) be sworn to thee to keep thy counsel, and fulfill thine intent as far forthwith as I can.

Then said the master of the ship, I love thy lady more than I can tell thee, for her beauty and feature is so excellent that I would give for the love of her, all the gold that I have : and if I may obtain the love of her through

thy help, I will give thee whatever thou wilt desire of me.

Then said the lady's servant: Tell me by what means I may help thee. —Then said the master of the ship, go home to thy lady again, and tell her that I will not deliver to thee the cloth except she come herself; and do thou but bring her to my ship, and if the wind be good and fit, then I purpose to lead her away. Thy counsel is good, quoth the lady's servant, therefore give me some reward and I shall fulfil your desire.

Now when he had received his reward, he went again to the lady and told her, that by no means the master of the ship would deliver him the cloth, except she came herself.

The lady believed her servant, and went to the ship. Now when she was within the ship-board, her servant abode without.

When the master saw that she was within the ship, and that the wind was good, he drew up the sail and sailed forth.

When the lady perceived this, thus she said to the master: O master

(quoth she) what treason is this thou hast done to me? The master answered and said; Madam, certainly it is so, that I must needs lie with thee, and afterwards espouse thee. O good Sir, quoth she, I have made a vow, that I shall never do such a thing but with him unto whom I am bound by right and by the law. Soothly (quoth he) if you will not grant it me with your good will, I will cast you out into the midst of the sea, and there shall you die an evil death: if it be so (quoth she) that I must needs consent or else die, first I pray thee to prepare a private place in the end of the ship, whereas I may fulfil thine intent ere I die, and also I pray thee that I may say my prayers unto the Father of Heaven that he may have mercy on me.

The master believed her, wherefore he did ordain her a Cabbin in the end of the ship wherein she kneeled down on both her knees, and made her prayer, saying on this wise: 'O thou my Lord God, thou hast kept me from my youth in cleanness, keep me now that I be not defloured, so that I may

ever serve thee with a clean heart and mind, and let not this wicked man prevail with me, nor any other like wickedness come nigh me.' When she had ended her prayers, there arose suddenly a great tempest in the sea, so that the ship broke all in pieces and all that were therein perished, save the Lady, as they thought; and she caught a cable and saved herself, and the master caught a board of the ship and saved himself likewise: nevertheless she knew not of him, nor he of her, for they were driven to divers coasts. The lady landed in her own empire near to a rich city, wherein she was honourably received, and she lived so holy a life, that God gave her grace and power to heal sick folk of all manner of diseases; wherefore there came much people to her, both crooked, blind and lame, and every man through the grace of God, and her good endeavour was healed, wherefore her name was known through divers regions. Nevertheless she was not known as the Empress. At the same time the Emperor's brother that had hanged her before by the hair,

was smitten with a foul leprosie. The Knight that slew the Earl's daughter and put the bloody knife in her hand, was blind, deaf, and had the palsie. The thief that betrayed her to the master of the ship, was lame and full of the cramp. And the master of the ship deprived of his wits.

When the Emperor heard that so holy a woman was in the city, he called his brother, and said to him thus, Let us go, dear brother, unto this holy woman that is dwelling in this city, that she may heal thee of thy leprosie. Would to God, O noble brother (quoth he) that I were healed. Anon the Emperor with his brother went towards the city. Then when the citizens heard of his coming, they received him honourably with procession and all provision becoming his estate. And then the Emperor enquired of the citizens, if any such holy woman were among them, that could heal sick folk of their diseases. The citizens answered and said, that such an one there was. Now at the same time, was come to the same city, the knight who slew the Earl's daughter, and the

thief which she saved from the gallows, and the master of the ship who had betrayed her, to be healed of their diseases.

Then was the Empress called forth before the Emperor, but she muffled her face as well as she could, that the Emperor, her husband, should not know her, and when she had so done, she saluted him with great reverence, as appertained to his state: and again he in like manner, saying thus; O good lady, if thou please of thy kindness to heal my brother, of his leprosie; ask of me what thou wilt, and I shall grant it thee for thy reward.

When the Empress heard this, she looked about her, and saw there the Emperor's brother a foul Leper; she saw there also the knight that slew the Earl's daughter, blind and deaf: the thief that she saved from the gallows, lame: and also the master of the ship, deprived of his wits, and all were come to her to be healed of their maladies, and knew her not: but though they knew her not, she knew them well. Then said she unto the Emperor thus: My reverend lord, tho'

you would give me all your Empire, I cannot heal your brother, nor any of these other, unless they acknowledge openly what great evil they have done.

When the Emperor heard this, he turned him towards his brother and said unto him; brother, acknowledge openly thy sin, before all these men, that thou mayest be healed of thy sickness. Then anon he began to tell how he had led his life; but he told not how he had hanged the Empress in the forest by the hair of her head most despoightfully.

When he had acknowledged all he thought fit, the Empress replied and said, soothly my lord, I would gladly lay unto him my medicine, but I know right well it is in vain, for he hath not made a full confession.

The Emperor hearing this, he turned towards his brother, and said in this wise; what evil sorrow, or other unhappy wretchedness is in thee? seest thou, not how, that thou art a foul Leper? therefore acknowledge thy sin truly, that thou mayest be whole, or else avoid my company for ever more.

Ah my lord (quoth he) I dare not tell my life openly, except I be sure of thy pardon. What, hast thou trespassed against me, said the Emperor? then answered his brother and said: Mine offence against thee is grievous, and therefore I ask thee heartily forgiveness. The Emperor thought not on the Empress, forasfinuch as he supposed she had been dead many years before; he commanded his brother to tell forth wherein he had offended him, and he should be forgiven.

When the Emperor had thus forgiven his brother, he began to tell openly how he had desired the Empress to commit Adultery with him, and because she denied, he had hanged her by the hair in the forest on such a day.

When the Emperor heard this, he was almost beside himself, and in this rage he said thus: O thou wretched creature, the vengeance of God is fallen upon thee, and were it not that I have pardoned thee, thou should die the most shameful death that could be thought.

Then said the knight that slew the Earl's daughter, I wot not, quoth he,

what lady you are, but I wot that my lord found on a time such a lady hanging in the forest, and brought her home to his castle, and he took her and gave her his daughter to keep, and I provoked her as much as I could to sin with me; but she would in no wise consent with me, wherefore I slew the Earl's daughter that lay with her, and when I had so done, I put the bloody knife in the lady's hand, that the Earl should think that she had slain his daughter with her own hand, and then she was exiled thence, but where she went I wot not.

Then said the thief, I wot not of what lady you speak; but well I wot that seven officers were leading me to the gallows, and such a lady came riding by, and bought me of them: and then went I with her and afterwards I betrayed her unto the master of the ship.

Such a lady, quoth the master of the ship, received I, and when we were in the midst of the sea I would have lain with her, but she kneeled down to her prayers, and anon there arose such a tempest, that the ship broke all in

pieces, and all therein were drowned save she and I, but afterwards what became of her I know not.

Then cried the Empress with a loud voice, and said: Soothly, dear friends, ye do now truly confess and declare the truth, wherefore I will now apply my medicine, and anon they received their healths.

When the lady the Empress had thus done, she uncovered her face to the Emperor, and he forthwith knew her, and ran to her and embraced her in his arms, and kissed her oftentimes, and for joy he wept bitterly: Saying blessed be God, now I have found what I desired. And when he had thus said he led her home to his Palace with great joy; and after, when it pleased Almighty God, they ended both their lives in peace and rest.



F I N I S.